

WYCOMBE TAKE IT EASY AFTER EARLY BURST!

By MICHAEL KNOX: Wycombe 2, Milton Keynes 0

WYCOMBE Wanderers scored twice in the first six minutes of Saturday's F.A. Cup second qualifying round tie against Milton Keynes City at Loakes Park, and appeared set for a massive victory. But, content with their lead, Wycombe relaxed and failed to add to their tally in the remaining 84 minutes.

Wycombe fans must have left the ground in two minds. No doubt glad that their side had progressed through another round, they had good reason to be disappointed with the manner of victory. With the amount of superiority they enjoyed, Blues should have won by at least four goals.

Milton Keynes, who until this season were known as Bletchley Town, are struggling in the lower reaches of Division One (North) of the Southern League, with only two league wins all term. And judging by Saturday's performance, this is not surprising.

Their defence started shakily, the mid-field was virtually non-existent, which meant that the willing front-running trio of Glen Burdett, Jim Coles and Steve McCaffery had virtually no support, and therefore the Wycombe defence had a particularly quiet day.

Terry Reardon, Mick Holifield and Howard Kennedy, although having all the time they needed in the middle of the field, were prone to give the ball away with careless passes and against stronger opposition, these errors would have been punished.

However, these mistakes probably would not have been made against a better team. By which I mean to say, that to an extent, Wycombe were brought down to their opponents' level, as they had no real incentive to score goals — no £40 bonus for instance.

Upfront Keith Searle looked particularly sharp, especially in the first half, while Steve Perrin gave his usual whole-hearted performance. Dylan Evans, did not have such a happy time and was replaced 10 minutes from time by Tony Horseman.

By packing their defence,

when trailing by two goals,

Milton Keynes made it difficult

for the Blues to create clear cut

openings.

Nevertheless, Wycombe did all required of them and in the next round will be away to Chesham United, who overcame Oxford City by a surprisingly comfortable 4-0 margin. Chesham seem to have one of their best sides for several years and could prove difficult to beat.

The visitors are managed by Brian Gibbs, who was in the Colchester side to knock Leeds United out of the same competition three years ago, and he was clearly hoping for another upset, when play began on Saturday. But his hopes were soon shattered as Wycombe started off like an express train with those two early goals.

In the very first minute City's new goalkeeper Ian Ballard had to come quickly off his line to foil the potent Searle, but there

was nothing he could do to prevent the talented striker from opening the scoring 60 seconds later.

Neat play by Paul Birdseye and Searle forced Brin Butler to give away a corner. Howard Kennedy's kick found Dave Bullock in acres of room. His header was flicked on by Perrin to Searle, who was left with the simple job of forcing the ball over the line from no more than three yards out.

Before the Milton Keynes defenders had time to sort themselves out Wycombe had increased the margin, with another goal following a dead ball situation. In the sixth minute, Reardon took a free kick 10 yards from the goalline and on the right flank. He sent it to the far post, where Perrin rose majestically to send the ball past the stranded Ballard.

'Blues' kept up the ferocious pace for the next 20 minutes as the visitors struggled to keep their heads above water. Their main problems arose from their defence's failure to clear the ball upfield at the first time of asking.

Evans saw a shot blocked, while Kennedy, who is gaining quite a reputation as a long range specialist, was not too far off target with one of his 'specials'.

Another close shave occurred in the 15th minute, when one of Birdseye's long throws into the goalmouth, was back-headed just wide of the far post by the impressive Searle. Wycombe were forcing corners with non-

otonous regularity and from one of them Bullock headed powerfully just over the top.

During this time, the best Milton Keynes could manage was a clever high lob by Burdett, which forced John Maskell to exert himself for the first time.

Burdett was undoubtedly the pick of the City forward line and once threatened danger, when getting round the back of Birdseye. But there was nobody in support and Wycombe cleared the ball with the minimum of fuss.

The visitors must have been getting a little frustrated with their play, for Brin Butler was booked in the 25th minute for showing dissent after his own side had been awarded a free-kick. At the same time City's experienced mid-field player Ian Reid, who won Amateur Cup winners' medals with Crook Town and Enfield, had to limp off the field.

For the final 15 minutes of the first half, Milton Keynes played with only 10 men, but for the first time made some advance into Wycombe territory. Full-back Butler produced their only direct shot of the half, with a fine curling effort, which forced Maskell to move smartly to his right.

The second half began quietly, with Wycombe content to sit on their lead. The peace was shattered temporarily by Kennedy, who fired a fierce 20 yard shot, which Ballard did well to tip over the bar for yet another corner. During the match Wanderers forced 13 to

their opponents' one — this stresses their overall superiority.

Dylan Evans, who found it hard to move into top gear, had a header cleared off the line by Andy Jones and then saw a narrow angled shot blocked by the goalkeeper, when a pass across the face of the goal would have probably been more profitable.

He was replaced 10 minutes from time by Horseman, who almost immediately moved into the danger zone, only to see a snap shot blocked. Although pressing continually forward, Wycombe found it hard to penetrate the City defence, which was marshalled astutely by Graham Wears and skipper Pete Harris who grew in confidence as the game progressed.

Much of the Blues' shooting came from outside the penalty area, and it was from this range that the dangerous Kennedy brought another good save from Ballard in the closing minutes.

Burdett was booked in injury time for a foul on the goalkeeper. I thought this a slightly harsh decision in the circumstances, but Mr. Wrennall gave an otherwise faultless refereeing display.

WYCOMBE WANDERERS: J. Maskell, P. Birdseye, G. Hand, K. Mead, D. Bullock, T. Reardon, K. Searle, H. Kennedy, D. Evans (Sub, A. Horseman 80th min), M. Holifield, S. Perrin.

MILTON KEYNES CITY: I. Ballard, A. Jones, B. Butler, I. Reid (sub, T. Robinson 46th min), G. Wears, P. Harris, G. Burdett, M. McCormick, J. Coles, T. McCafferty, S. McCaffery.

Referee: P. C. Wrennall (Burnham). **Scorers:** Wycombe — Searle (2 mins), Perrin (6).

Approximate total attendance: 1,400.